

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

RECOLLECTING OURSELVES FOR WORSHIP

Music (please use this time for quiet and reflection)

Gong [followed by silence]

Lighting the First Advent Candle

** Hymn – Insert (O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, vs. 1-3)

Opening Prayer

**

OUR HUMANNESSE AND GOD'S GRACE

Call to Confession

Unison Prayer of Confession

Gracious God, if I had things my way, my relationship with you would be a rhapsody in the way I think of a rhapsody: enthusiastic, impassioned, melodic and harmonious. I do not have this kind of relationship with you, but I believe I should and I strive for it. The reason I do not have this relationship with you is because you do not do rhapsodies in the way I understand them. You do them in the way you understand them: a composition of irregular form that often incorporates improvisation. I have a difficult time accepting the idea that my relationship with you is largely a composition composed by you for my enjoyment. I would rather compose it myself. If I did, I would include all the regularities I already enjoy, and I would indulge myself in them. Your composition improvises a great deal and includes lots of feelings and thoughts I consider irregularities. Your melody lines are strange to me, and I find your harmonies so elaborate they are almost dissonances.

Personal Prayer of Confession in Silence

Assurance of Pardon

LISTENING FOR THE WORD OF GOD

Story for the Children

Scripture – Mark 13:24-37

Prompting

Silence and Reflection

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Hymn – Insert (O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, vs. 4-5)

Announcements

Minute for Mission

Our Gifts and Offerings

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Christ all creatures here below;

Praise Holy Spirit, Comforter;

One God, Triune, whom we adore. Amen.

The Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us in the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

GOING OUT – to serve, to journey, to live the word

Hymn – Insert (O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, vs. 6-7)

Charge and Benediction

** People who have arrived late are seated.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

TODAY	10:00	Worship
	11:00	Coffee and Fellowship
	11:30	Conversation
	12:00	Lunch Bunch
MONDAY	1:00	Centering Prayer, at church

Lectionary Readings for December 7, 2014

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

FYI

Materials related to the 2014 Presbyterian Giving Catalog are on the table in the coffee room.

Also on that table is a sign-up sheet for treats for the Sundays in Advent and Christmas. The suggestion is to bring foods that have some meaning for us, for example “family favorites,” “traditional foods” and “favorite party foods.” The sign-up has two lines per Sunday so it is possible to “buddy up.”

The Usher in the Narthex: Jim Plein.

The Usher in the Sanctuary: Richard Egan.

Faith Presbyterian Church, 190 Arlen Dr., Rohnert Park CA 94928

Church Office: 707-795-6620

Our web site is <www.faithpresbyterianrp.org>

Elders: Joan Schmutz, Marolyn Bode, Jim Plein.

Deacons: Jenny Goldgur, Richard Egan, Mary Jane Beccaria.

Clerk of Session: Marolyn Bode.

[H] 585-8350

Pastor: Jim Robie

[C] 291-8489

We are a community that gathers in an attitude of reverence directed toward God.

Reverence is a feeling of deep respect and devotion, of profound awe, of admiration and esteem and honor, of gratitude.

This feeling arises from the knowing that it is not possible to be separate from the welcoming and embracing presence of God, who is with us in anything and everything that life brings us, always accepting how we feel and what we think, always working to help us inhabit what is true for us, and to fashion the most fully human response possible for us in response to what our life contains.

If you are able to enter this worship experience in a reverential manner, you are encouraged to immerse yourself in the experience.

If you are not able to do so, you are encouraged to consider that being truthful to your experience is a way of showing reverence to God who invites you to explore the value of the way you feel in your life and about your life. You are also invited to ponder with us our conceptions about God, looking for more adequate ways to understand God and how God personally companions and supports us in all things.

Welcome!

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT [Mark 13:24-37]

The first Sunday of Advent always focuses on the appearance of the Son of Man. The “Son of Man” is a being or figure found in mythology at the time of the writing of the New Testament. In mythology when a “being” appears it means that something is happening, and the “being” is understood as the agent of its occurrence. The Son of Man is the “being” whose appearance brings about change. Something that has been in existence for a while is coming to an end and something new or altered is coming into existence. In our time we describe this differently, something like an insight dawns or a realization appears, and for us it is the realization that precipitates change.

Sometimes what enters awareness introduces us to an aspect of our self that is consonant with our customary self-concept. The insight adds to our self-concept and changes it, and does so in a way that is harmonious. These additions are usually easy for us to assimilate in that we are able to do whatever work is needed to integrate them. In this case, the Son of Man arrives, but Advent does not.

Advent arrives when what enters awareness is difficult for us to accept because it is not harmonious with our customary self-concept. Something enters our awareness which does not fit with the way we see ourselves and it results in our no longer being able to see ourselves in the same way. The arrival of this insight initiates the ending of one understanding of the person we are, and the emergence of another understanding of who we are. Whatever enters our awareness allows us to see that we are not simply who we thought, and are more than what we thought.

Depending on what the awareness is, the degree of dissonance can be mild to severe. The consequence of this is that to a greater or lesser degree the heart falls out of the way we have experienced ourselves. Even if we retain our self-concept, we are not able to do so enthusiastically or wholeheartedly. The primary experience of this change is that of being lost, of being without bearings and not knowing how to navigate our life. Using the metaphors in the text...it is like “the sun has darkened,” “the moon does not give its light,” “the stars have fallen from heaven,”

and “the powers in the heavens are shaken” [these are all navigational references].

The first Sunday in Advent always highlights this experience of being lost and not knowing how to navigate the life that is ours. It is important to keep this experience tied to Advent. When there is no context into which to place such an experience, being lost and without heart can be very difficult. However, if we keep this experience connected to the season of Advent we find that the season provides a framework that tells us the experience is part of something bigger and will take us somewhere. A change in our self-image is underway, a change which will make the way we understand ourselves more inclusive and adequate and accurate. Using the image of an internal table around which the different aspects of who we are engage in self-talk, space is being made around our internal table so other aspects of who we are can join in the conversation. The deconstruction we are experiencing is part of this work, and will eventually bring us to a reconstruction, a being gathered together again in a different and more complete way. “Then he [the Son of Man] will send out his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.” Advent brings the promise that we will be gathered together again, and tells us that this gathering will be different from the previous ways we have been gathered.

There is a big difference between someone who is lost and is frantic not to be, and someone who is lost and knows or accepts they are lost. For the first person, being lost cannot be true, and they are driven to make it not be true. There is no way such a person can relate to and reflect on their situation; they can only run from it. For the second person, being lost is true so the possibility exists for them to relate to it and reflect on it. The entire season of Advent describes how we are moved from being the first person to being the second, from being someone who can only run from being lost into being someone who can reflect on being lost. Advent does not bring an end to our being lost; it brings us to a place of being able to be thoughtful in it and about it.

In order for this to occur the experience of being lost must register. The metaphor in the text is that of a fig tree: when its

branches become tender and put forth leaves we know that summer is near. In like manner, when the heart begins to fall out of the familiar world in which we live, we know a restrictive and less adequate way of understanding ourselves is coming to an end and a more expansive and inclusive understanding is forming. The experience of the loss of heart, of the inability to believe in and navigate our normal life, comes to us when it comes to us. No one knows the day or the hour. It is very important, then, to notice it when it comes. Therefore we are admonished in the text to “beware” [look at], “keep alert” [watch, be sleepless], and “keep awake” [watch], otherwise we will not recognize the experience for what it is—the beginning of a larger change—and we will dismiss it and not take it seriously and pay attention to it.

This loss of heart, this inability to believe wholeheartedly in the understanding of ourselves we have always had, is the first of a series of shifts or developments in our awareness. Each of these shifts builds on the previous awareness, and prepares the way for the next shift in awareness. There will be a total of four such shifts in awareness, and together they comprise the season of Advent. All together they make us ready to receive a fifth shift, what is called the “birth of Christ,” celebrated in the season of Christmas. But for now, at the beginning of Advent, the experience we attend to is that of the loss of heart around the understanding of ourselves that has guided us up until now, and the consequent experience of not knowing how to navigate the life we have in the present.

[Jim Robie, 11-25-14, Cycle B, Mark 13:24-37]